



Multi-National Division – North

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Civil Affairs works toward promising future for Iraqi citizens

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MOSUL, Iraq – The morning sun shines upon a now familiar scene in the war-ridden city of Mosul. Shoppers crowd the sidewalks as vendors sell their goods out of tattered storefronts.

Long ago, Mosul was known for its art and theatrical productions, said Staff Sgt. Jonathan Anderstrom, a linguist assigned to Company C, 415th Civil Affairs Battalion. Today, Mosul is trying to rebuild from the devastation and destruction left by Al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups.

Earlier this year, the city of Mosul contained one of Iraq's highest concentrations of insurgents. After several successful operations like Operation Lion's Roar, the insurgents started to flee Mosul.

With the increased security throughout the city, the 415th CA, based out of Kalamazoo, Mich., now meets with city officials and local leaders to plan reconstruction efforts.

“Once security is established in Mosul, economic growth can develop; civil society can develop,” said Anderstrom of Mishawaka, Ind.

For economic growth to take place, a new base must be re-established, said Maj. Donald Vaha, the 415th CA civil affairs team chief.

“The Middle East, in general, is going through a huge population boom,” said Vaha, a Kalamazoo, Mich. Native. “So, there is a vast majority of their population that is under the age of 20. In terms, trying to engage those young people and get them into positive activities will give them a positive outlet, he said.

“Hopefully, by engaging the younger people in those neighborhoods it will build a stronger bond to the community,” Vaha said. “You want to engage the youth to try to minimize the influence of parties that are trying to take advantage of them. It’s more about helping a nation help itself.”

“The thing about the U.S. Army is that we are over here seven months, eight months, a maximum of 15 months at a time,” said Anderstrom. “These people, these organizations that we’re developing will be here the rest of their lives. If we can influence that piece of the puzzle, we’ve implemented change for the entire city (and) province; possibly the entire nation.

“So, that change is life-long if we can implement that,” he said. “It doesn’t matter if we leave in 15 months as a unit. It doesn’t matter who comes in next. If we can implement that change at the grass roots level, civil leadership will last well past the time we leave here.”



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Maj. Donald Vaha of Kalamazoo, Mich., a civil affairs team chief and Staff Sgt. Jonathan Anderstrom of Mishawaka, Ind., both assigned to Company C, 415th Civil Affairs Battalion, discuss starting a youth soccer program in Mosul with a manager in the Ninewah Ministry of Recreation, Parks and Youths Sports. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Kyle J. Richardson, 11th Public Affairs Detachment)



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Maj. Donald Vaha of Kalamazoo, Mich., a civil affairs team chief assigned to the Company C, 415th Civil Affairs Battalion, discuss plans for starting a youth soccer program in Mosul with the manager and the director of the Ninewah Ministry of Recreation, Parks and Youths Sports. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Kyle J. Richardson, 11th Public Affairs Detachment)

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